

16.04.21

NHS Test, Trace, Protect: COVID-19 Rapid Lateral Flow Self-Test

Dear parent/carer,

Welsh Government has recently announced that a free and voluntary programme of asymptomatic COVID-19 testing will be available in education and childcare settings across Wales. This offer is available to all pupils in years 7 – 13.

Along with the primary infection control measures we have implemented, such as social distancing and good hand hygiene, testing will allow us to provide some additional reassurance to the wider school/college community.

Up to one in three people who have COVID-19 have the virus without symptoms so could be transmitting the virus unknowingly. Part of controlling the spread of the virus requires identifying those infectious individuals who aren't showing any symptoms and asking them to self-isolate. Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. The speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus.

As the tests are more sensitive with higher viral loads, there is a risk of returning a negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why it is recommended that two LFD tests are taken weekly on a **Monday** and a **Thursday** morning, before attendance at schools.

If your child tests positive using a LFD, it is likely that they are infectious and they must self-isolate immediately and book and take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test **within 24 hours of their positive LFD test result**. Contact tracing will be triggered following a positive LFD and any close contacts will be required to self-isolate until your child receives their PCR test result. If the PCR test result is positive they and their close contacts will have to self-isolate.

A negative LFD result should not be read as a means to relax or ignore social distancing or other virus prevention measures intended to reduce transmission – LFD is an additional tool that contributes to reducing risk.

How the tests work

If you agree for your child to take part, a consent form will need to be completed and returned. You should then arrange with your child's school for your child to collect a pack of LFD test kits which will enable self-testing from home. The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes. Comprehensive guidance on self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet which comes with the test kit.

Once the test has been conducted each test result must be logged online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result.

Purpose of testing

It is important to highlight that the purposes of the testing policy in education and childcare in Wales is to complement the primary control measures (such as social distancing and face coverings) that have already been put in place to enable face to face learning / care to continue and to:

- Rapidly identify those who are regularly on site during learning/care hours, who are unknowingly carrying the virus and ask them to self-isolate to reduce disruption to face to face education / care.
- Complement symptomatic results data with asymptomatic results data to provide a picture of infection rates as marker for the effectiveness, and implementation of, primary control measures and to assist in the early identification of clusters. In addition to a range of other data and public health advice this information can be used to inform national policy decisions.

The testing policy for education and childcare should not be viewed as a ‘test to enable’ or ‘test to return’ to face to face learning, i.e. it is not a condition of coming on to the site or accessing learning/care. Additionally, this testing offer is entirely voluntary.

Consent / Privacy

All individuals wishing to take part should familiarise themselves with the testing process and privacy notice, if you choose for your child to participate, you are committing to self-administer the test and provide results for all tests (negative or positive).

With our primary protective measures and testing, we will help to reduce the spread of the virus. However, anyone who chooses not to participate should still attend school as long as they are not displaying symptoms.

People who decline to participate in this testing programme should follow the usual national guidelines on self-isolation and anyone should get tested if they show symptoms.